

Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of this application, as amended, are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 and 8-10 have been amended, claims 4-7 have been canceled, and claims 11-17 readable on the elected species have been added. Claims 1-3 and 8-17 are now pending in the application, with claims 8-10 withdrawn from consideration as directed to a non-elected invention. In this respect, it is to be noted that claims 8-10 have been amended to depend from claim 1. The rejections are respectfully submitted to be obviated in view of the amendments and remarks presented herein. No new matter has been introduced through the foregoing amendments.

In response to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, claim 3 has been amended. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under § 112 are respectfully requested.

To enhance the scope of protection sought for the invention, dependent claims 11-17 have been added. Support for claims 13-17 is found at specification pages 9 and 10, paragraphs [0028] and [0029].

Entry of each of the amendments is respectfully requested.

35 U.S.C. § 102(b) - Brown; Bertrand; Saslecov

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,217,059 to Brown et al. (hereinafter "Brown"). The Office Action asserts that "[a]irbag 110 is in front of the ankle."

Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 2,834,606 to Bertrand. The Office Action asserts (with reference to Bertrand's Fig. 2) that "lower airbags 33 are in front of the ankle."

Claims 1-3 and 5 stand rejected under § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,092,836 to Saslecov. The Office Action asserts (with reference to Saslecov's Fig. 2) that "a first portion of the airbag is in front of the ankle (at location of pointer 12; 'in front of,' i.e., forward of); a second portion is in front of the knee (at location of pointer 9)."

Each of the rejections under § 102(b) is respectfully traversed. For at least the following reasons, the disclosures of Brown, Bertrand, and Saslecov do not anticipate Applicants' claimed invention.

An object of Applicants' invention is to provide a leg protection system in which an airbag deploys in a direction opposite to the direction in which the occupant's legs move forward. Therefore, it is possible to effectively prevent the legs from moving forward, and to restrain ankles or insteps in an early stage of airbag deployment.

As indicated above, amended claim 1 defines in pertinent part "one airbag for protecting an ankle and knee of the occupant, the one airbag comprising a first chamber, a second chamber separate from the first chamber, and at least one duct connecting the first chamber and the second chamber for providing communication therebetween; and an inflator connected to the airbag for inflating the airbag."

Brown's, Bertrand's, and Saslecov's devices are each structurally different from Applicants' claimed airbag system. Brown discloses separate airbags for protecting different portions of an occupant's legs, each airbag having its own inflator. See, e.g., Brown's Fig. 5. Brown fails to disclose one airbag having a first chamber, a second chamber separate from the first chamber, and at least one duct connecting the first chamber and the second chamber for providing communication therebetween, as claimed.

Bertrand discloses a "relatively large airtight bag 33" (column 2, lines 67-68). See, e.g., bag 33 in Bertrand's Fig. 2. But, Bertrand also fails to disclose Applicants' claimed airbag having a first chamber, a second chamber separate from the first chamber, and at least one duct connecting the first chamber and the second chamber for providing communication therebetween.

Saslecov discloses an airbag 9 that "is of a conventional kind, and is therefore not described in detail" (column 5, lines 22-23). Namely, the airbag 9 of Saslecov protects a knee and leg of the occupant, but it does not protect the leg including an ankle. Thus, the object of Saslecov is different from the invention. Further, Saslecov too fails to disclose one airbag having a first chamber, a second chamber separate from the first chamber, and at least one duct connecting the first chamber and the second chamber for providing communication therebetween.

In case the knee, leg and ankle are protected by an airbag, the capacity of the airbag must be large. However, in the invention, since the airbag is separated into plural chambers, the capacity of the airbag can be made compact. Namely, unnecessary portions of the airbag are not inflated. Also, since the duct connects the plural chambers, one inflator can inflate the plural chambers.

Since none of Brown, Bertrand, and Saslecov describes each limitation of the claimed invention, none of the references anticipates the invention defined by Applicants' claims 1-3.

For at least the above reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the rejections under § 102(b) are respectfully requested.

In view of the amendment of claim 1 and the cancellation of claim 6, the rejection of claim 6 under § 103(a) is deemed to be obviated. In response to the ground of rejection, however, Applicants note that the disclosure of Takimoto does not rectify

the above-described deficiency of Saslecov. Applicants' claimed system includes an airbag having not only a duct, but a first chamber and a second chamber *separate from* the first chamber. As is evident from Takimoto's Fig. 10 (relied upon in the Office Action), lower and upper expansion portions 30 and 31, respectively, are directly adjacent to one another.

Also, numeral 33 referred to by the Examiner is a tether connecting the front wall 27 and the rear wall 28 for limiting the thickness of the airbag, not separating the airbag into several chambers. The tether 33 does not form duct portion, as stated by the Examiner.

Furthermore, Takimoto discloses that gas first flows through "gas communication ports 34" (column 15, lines 4-50), and then "the sewing thread 44 is broken to open the auxiliary opening 43b, and the inflating gas G flows linearly out from the auxiliary opening 43b *upward and into the upper expansion portion 31.*"

Takimoto neither teaches nor suggests Applicants' claimed duct for distributing the inflation gas, let alone the separate chambers.

New dependent claims 11-17 are also allowable. Claim 11 adds the limitation that "the first chamber is inflated in front of the ankle," and claim 12 adds the limitation that "the first chamber is inflated before the second chamber is inflated." Claims 13-17 add structural limitations that define how the airbag is divided into the first chamber, the second chamber, and the duct.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejections of the claims and pass this application to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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